

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

March 29, 2021

9:22 a.m.

9:22:10 AM

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Bishop called the Senate Finance Committee meeting to order at 9:22 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Click Bishop, Co-Chair  
Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair  
Senator Donny Olson (via teleconference)  
Senator Natasha von Imhof (via teleconference)  
Senator Bill Wielechowski  
Senator David Wilson

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Lyman Hoffman

ALSO PRESENT

Erin Shine, Staff, Senator Click Bishop; Senator Gary Stevens, Sponsor; Tim Lamkin, Staff, Senator Gary Stevens.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Sondra Meredith, Teacher Certification Administrator, Department of Education and Early Development; Deena Bishop, Superintendent, Anchorage School District; Tammie Perreault, Northwest Regional Liaison, Military and Family Policy, United States Department of Defense.

SUMMARY

SB 20        OUT OF STATE TEACHER RECIPROCITY

SB 20 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

SB 32        COLLEGE CREDIT FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

CSSB 32(FIN) was REPORTED out of committee with a "do pass" recommendation and with two previously published zero fiscal notes: FN 1(EED) and FN 2(UA).

SB 36 U OF A REGENTS REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

CSSB 36(EDC) was REPORTED out of committee with a "do pass" recommendation and with one new zero fiscal note from the University.

#sb32

SENATE BILL NO. 32

"An Act establishing the Alaska middle college program for public school students; and relating to the powers of the University of Alaska."

[9:23:10 AM](#)

Co-Chair Bishop relayed that it was the second hearing for SB 32, and the committee had taken public testimony on March 22, 2021. He stated the intent to adopt a Committee Substitute (CS), consider an amendment, review fiscal notes, and look to the will of the committee.

Senator Wielechowski MOVED to ADOPT proposed committee substitute for SB 32, Work Draft 32-LS0307\B (Klein, 3/23/21).

Co-Chair Bishop OBJECTED for discussion.

[9:23:58 AM](#)

ERIN SHINE, STAFF, SENATOR CLICK BISHOP, discussed the proposed CS. She read from an Explanation of Changes Document:

Page 1, Line 2 Updates title for effective date

Page 2, Lines 20-23 Deletes previous proposed 14.30.780(b) language and inserts language that the Alaska Middle College Program shall be made available to each school district by the University of Alaska if a school district elects to participate.

Page 4, Lines 20-21 Clarifies that the University of Alaska shall enter into agreements for a school district that elects to participate.

Page 4, Line 26 Provides an effective date of July 1, 2022.

Ms. Shine conveyed that she had contacted the Legislative Legal Department after the previous hearing on the bill to get clarification regarding some public testimony that indicated that the bill required school districts to participate in the middle college program. The legal staff indicated that language in Version A of the bill iterated that if a student was eligible and interested, a school district would be required to try and enter into an agreement with the Alaska Middle College. She had spoken with the sponsor and the sponsor's staff, who indicated the result was not the intent of the version of the bill under consideration. The CS tried to remedy the matter and ensured that the program was required for the university to offer but did not require school districts to participate.

Co-Chair Bishop WITHDREW his OBJECTION. There being NO further OBJECTION, it was so ordered.

9:25:58 AM  
AT EASE

9:26:37 AM  
RECONVENED

Co-Chair Stedman MOVED to ADOPT Amendment 1, 32-LS0307\B.1 (Klein, 3/27/21):

Page 3, line 1, following "district":  
Insert "that elects to participate in the program"

Co-Chair Bishop OJBECTED for discussion.

Ms. Shine explained that Amendment 1 made one more clarifying change to the CS. After the CS was drafted, the committee had realized that there was one more section that would require something from every school district. The change conformed to other sections and clarified that school districts that were participating in the program

would have to notify students and parents of the opportunity if a student was eligible to participate.

Senator Wielechowski wanted legislative understanding of how election of participation occurred. He asked if a school board would need to pass something or if a superintendent could take some action.

Ms. Shine was unsure of how a school would elect to participate in the program. She thought there was invited testimony that could address the question.

Senator Wielechowski thought it was important to get more legislative understanding of the issue.

Co-Chair Bishop invited the sponsor and his staff to speak to the amendment.

9:29:06 AM

SENATOR GARY STEVENS, SPONSOR, thought it was a simple procedure to elect to participate in the program. He thought there were many ways for a district to elect to participate, and the decision would usually involve action by the superintendent or school board. He did not think the matter needed further definition.

Co-Chair Bishop WITHDREW his OBJECTION. There being NO further OBJECTION, it was so ordered. Amendment 1 was ADOPTED.

Senator Stevens explained that the intent of the bill was to help students throughout the state to get college credits while in high school. He cited an equity issue and noted that many larger districts already had the opportunity while many smaller districts did not. He appreciated the amendment changing the language from "shall" to "may." He knew the University had explicitly stated that it would make the program available to any district that wanted it. Additionally, larger districts had gone out of their way to ensure that extremely small districts could access the program through the larger district. He thought the program was a real advantage for students.

Senator Wilson discussed fiscal note 1 from the Department of Education and Early Development, OMB Component 2796. He

specified that FY 22 showed a zero cost, and out-year costs were all zero. The department stated there was no fiscal impact from the bill.

Senator Wilson discussed fiscal note 2 from the University, OMB Component 730. He specified that FY 22 showed a zero cost, and out-year costs were all zero. He read from the analysis on page 2 of the fiscal note:

The university's existing middle college programs are designed to be cost neutral to UA in that the tuition provided by the students through their school districts is sufficient to cover the university's costs to run the program.

[9:32:45 AM](#)

AT EASE

[9:32:51 AM](#)

RECONVENED

Co-Chair Stedman MOVED to report CSSB 32(FIN) out of Committee as amended with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes.

CSSB 32(FIN) was REPORTED out of committee as amended with a "do pass" recommendation and with two previously published zero fiscal notes: FN 1(EED) and FN 2 (UA).

[9:33:11 AM](#)

AT EASE

[9:34:23 AM](#)

RECONVENED

#sb36

SENATE BILL NO. 36

"An Act relating to reporting requirements of the Board of Regents of the University of Alaska."

[9:34:23 AM](#)

Co-Chair Bishop read the title of the bill. He relayed that it was the bill's second hearing, and public testimony was taken on March 22, 2021. The intent was to re-introduce the

bill, cover fiscal notes, and look to the will of the committee.

Senator Gary Stevens, Sponsor, spoke to the bill. He explained that the bill came about because of the loss of accreditation by the School of Education at the University of Alaska Anchorage. The loss had been a shock to everyone, particularly to the president at the time, and various chancellors who had not known that accreditation had been in jeopardy. The purpose of the bill was to bring the legislature "into the loop" so it had some idea of accreditation status. He estimated that the University of Alaska dealt over 200 accreditations for schools, departments, and programs. He cautioned that there were those did not support the bill, and he informed that the Board of Regents thought the legislature was overstepping its bounds. He thought it was the state's responsibility to have someone that was paying attention to accreditation. He mentioned previous testimony by the University and emphasized the importance of tracking accreditation matters.

Co-Chair Bishop appreciated Senator Wilson's re-introduction of the bill.

Senator Wielechowski discussed a new fiscal note from the University of Alaska, OMB Component 730. There was a zero-appropriation request for FY 22. There were no expected expenses incurred for the out years.

Co-Chair Stedman MOVED to report CSSB 36(EDC) out of Committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal note. There being NO OBJECTION, it was so ordered.

CSSB 36(EDC) was REPORTED out of committee with a "do pass" recommendation and with one new zero fiscal note from the University of Alaska.

9:37:50 AM

AT EASE

9:39:09 AM

RECONVENED

#sb20

SENATE BILL NO. 20

"An Act relating to recognition of certificates of out-of-state teachers."

[9:39:09 AM](#)

Senator Gary Stevens, Sponsor, thanked the committee for hearing SB 20. He reminded that school districts had a difficult time making sure there were enough teachers. He asserted that the bill would help by allowing teacher reciprocity to occur. He mentioned the high number of United States Coast Guard personnel and spouses, some of whom were ready to teach after being certified in other places. He explained that school districts supported reciprocity, which would help solve the teacher shortage in Alaska. He thought the bill supported the state's high teaching standards while addressing barriers to entry.

[9:40:42 AM](#)

TIM LAMKIN, STAFF, SENATOR GARY STEVENS, explained that the bill aligned with regulatory suspensions that occurred by emergency order the previous year, to assist districts with the teacher shortage.

Mr. Lamkin discussed a Sectional Analysis (copy on file):

Sec. 1: AS 14.20.010, relating to a teaching certificate being required to teach in Alaska, removes the reference of there being a preliminary certificate.

Sec. 2: AS 14.20.015(a), relating to out-of-state teaching certificates, removes reference to there being a preliminary certificate.

Sec. 3: AS 14.20.015(b), relating to out-of-state teaching certificates, removes a requirement for passing a competency exam, and replaces it with a requirement to complete a college course in Alaska studies and multi or cross-cultural studies within two years.

Sec. 4: AS 14.20.015(c), relating to out-of-state teaching certificates, removes reference to there being a preliminary teaching certificate.

Sec. 5: AS 14.20.015(g) is added to direct the department to establish regulations to expedite the out-of-state teaching certification application process for military spouses.

Sec 6: AS 14.20.020(h), relating to a requirement to complete a college course in Alaska studies and multi or cross-cultural studies, to allow an out-of-state teacher to receive their Alaska certificate, but to complete those studies within 3 years.

Sec 7: AS 14.20.020(k), relating to the requirement of a variety of trainings to take place before being issued an Alaska teaching certificate, to allow out-of-state certificate holders 3 years to complete such trainings.

Sec. 8: AS 14.20.015 (d), (e), and (f), relating to preliminary teaching certificate employment, tenure and expiration are repealed.

9:43:28 AM

Senator Wilson asked about Section 3. He asked if Alaska teachers would still be required to take the competency exam to be licensed.

Mr. Lamkin answered in the affirmative. In-state teachers were required to take all the assessments. The bill proposed that if a teacher was in good standing in another state and did all that was required, the teacher should be eligible to teach in Alaska.

Senator Wilson asked if all other states had similar exams as related to Alaska standards.

Mr. Lamkin noted that the Praxis exam and other tests set a high bar. He expressed that generally the bill recognized that if a teacher passed the test in one state, it would transfer to Alaska.

Senator Stevens reminded that the school district and hiring process would ensure that any incoming teacher would have the necessary skills and experience.

Senator Wilson asked if the bill would allow teachers to graduate from a school in Alaska, gain an easier



certification in another state, and then return to Alaska to teach using the reciprocity proposed in the bill.

Mr. Lamkin was not entirely sure about the answer to Senator Wilson's question and deferred the question to invited testimony. He assured the committee that the intent of the bill was not to allow for teachers to cheat the system.

[9:47:16 AM](#)

SONDRA MEREDITH, TEACHER CERTIFICATION ADMINISTRATOR, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT (via teleconference), explained that part of university requirements for teachers required the exams referenced earlier. She continued that the state had adopted a number of exams that were offered outside the state, and over the course of time the exams had been considered and approved by the Alaska State Board of Education as comparable to state competency standards.

Senator Wilson discussed the difference in state requirements for teacher education programs. He noted that some states required a degree in a subject area, but Alaska required an education degree. He wondered how the difference translated to competency in Alaska teaching standards.

Ms. Meredith explained that the types of certificates brought to the state would be examined to ascertain that certificates being provided were issued based on completion of a state-approved program. She assured that there would be a check in place to ensure an applicant had been through a state-approved program. The department was a member of an organization that would identify individuals that had completed a state-approved program.

[9:50:59 AM](#)

Senator Wilson asked about a state that had certificates issued for life. He asked if individuals would have the certificate without the 5-year renewal requirement.

Ms. Meredith informed that the certificate issued as a result of the legislation was a professional 5-year license that would need to be renewed every 5 years.

Senator Wielechowski was curious what was needed to attain a teaching certificate in Alaska. He asked about the policy rationale for teacher certificates.

Ms. Meredith explained that the reason the state issued teaching certifications was to ensure that individuals had not violated ethical standards. She noted that the state did criminal background checks. The department considered teaching applicants' training to ensure teachers had content expertise and the ability to present the content to help students learn. The department looked for state-approved programs to ensure teachers had the pedagogical knowledge to help students learn.

[9:53:45 AM](#)

Senator Wielechowski assumed that to obtain a teaching certificate in Alaska currently, an applicant needed a background check, an approved degree program. He asked if a test was needed.

Ms. Meredith answered "yes."

Senator Wielechowski asked if the key distinction of the bill was that applicants would not have to take the test.

Ms. Meredith estimated that 48 of the states had similar testing requirements to Alaska and had a basic competency exam and a content exam.

Senator Wielechowski asked if the bill considered that applicants will have taken a similar test in another state.

Ms. Meredith answered in the affirmative.

Co-Chair Bishop referenced Section 7 and asked how long it took an applicant to complete the four areas of training.

Ms. Meredith stated that the areas of training were available as e-learning modules through the department, and the modules took roughly two hours to complete.

Co-Chair Bishop asked if the areas of training were the last step before a certificate was issued.

Senator Stevens explained that the bill gave a qualified teacher from another state two years to complete the

program. He noted that it was possible to complete the training through a 3-credit course through the University of Alaska. He did not think the requirement would prevent an applicant from getting a certificate.

Co-Chair Bishop asked if the required training was required before an applicant could get a reciprocity certificate.

Ms. Meredith understood that currently applicants would be allowed up to two years to satisfy the requirements.

9:57:34 AM

Senator Wielechowski noted that a person born and raised in Alaska would be required to complete training on a list of subjects before acquiring a teaching certificate and asked if an out of state applicant would not.

Senator Stevens reminded that there was a teacher shortage, and the bill intended to assist hiring teachers in good standing in other states. He thought the bill would primarily be used in his district with military spouses. He qualified that the bill was not to ease standards. He knew that many teachers opted to take the full 3-credit course for the required training.

Senator Wilson relayed that he had worked in the registrar's office at a university. He mentioned the Alaska Staff Development Network and thought the required training was not difficult to attain. He discussed different types of teaching certification. He asked if the bill would allow for all types of certifications to be transferable for reciprocity.

Mr. Lamkin clarified that the bill only applied to teacher certification. The bill only changed that incoming teachers would have two years to take the required training. The bill would help expedite teachers that were military spouses with good standing as teachers in other states.

Co-Chair Stedman wondered if the bill sponsor could help with understanding the estimated demand for the changes proposed in the bill. He asked how many incoming teachers would be using the reciprocity each year.

Senator Stevens reminded that the program was not mandatory and would only be used if there was a teacher shortage. He

did not think there would be a large number of applicants but wanted to defer the question to an invited testifier.

10:01:52 AM

DEENA BISHOP, SUPERINTENDENT, ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT (via teleconference), estimated that there would be about 60 to 100 teachers seeking a reciprocity certificate. She identified that there had been member questions and concerns related to the rigor of teacher education. She did not share the concerns and thought applicants from out of state had similar educational standards. She thought the hiring entity would be looking for teachers with experience. She thought testing was not of huge concern.

Ms. Bishop continued her remarks. She highlighted that some teacher programs did not include a student-teacher experience. The bill would allow districts to look at applicants' teaching records. She noted that the Anchorage School District employed many military spouses, and the bill would add to the pool of qualified teacher applicants.

Senator Wilson asked if school districts could do temporary licensure to allow a qualified person to complete some of the training standards.

Ms. Bishop thought there might be a way to grant a temporary certificate, but that it was difficult. She noted that the request was not coming from applicants, but rather from school districts that were seeking additional teachers, and the onus would be on the to ensure compliance with educational standards.

Senator Wilson asked if districts could currently request a temporary certification if it was trying to hire a qualified applicant.

Ms. Bishop did not have an example of what Senator Wilson described. She thought the scenario had never happened. She thought more information was needed from the department.

10:06:21 AM

Senator Wielechowski asked if Ms. Bishop thought the required training (related to drugs and alcohol, teen dating violence, disabilities, sexual abuse, and assault) was important for teachers to have.

Ms. Bishop answered in the affirmative. She added that there were a couple of additional trainings also required by school districts. She suggested that additional time for on-boarding qualified teachers would be a good thing. She thought districts had an interest in having highly skilled and highly knowledgeable teachers and could speed up the process.

Co-Chair Bishop was curious where the largest gap for teachers in the ASD.

Ms. Bishop identified that K-12 special education teachers, as well as the related services such as speech pathologists were the areas in which more teachers were needed. She thought one of the other largest deficits was in areas such as science and mathematics in high school. She mentioned renewed focus in early childhood education and an increased need for teachers.

Senator Wilson mentioned the high burnout rate for out of state teachers, particularly those that went to teach in rural areas. He asked if the bill could add to increased costs for districts because of hiring more out of state teachers.

Senator Stevens believed in-state teachers would always be preferred. He reiterated that hiring out of state teachers would be due to a teacher shortage. He acknowledged the high burnout rate of teachers that came to Alaska and did not think the bill would change the matter.

[10:10:29 AM](#)

TAMMIE PERREAULT, NORTHWEST REGIONAL LIAISON, MILITARY AND FAMILY POLICY, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (via teleconference), relayed that her office worked with state legislators to address quality of life issues for military families. She highlighted information that had been conveyed in previous bill hearings, such as that many states provided teacher reciprocity at the level proposed in the bill. She noted that there were 16 states with similar language pertaining to military spouses.

Ms. Perreault cited that a 2015 study found that teacher reciprocity was a benefit to the teaching profession. She expressed support for the policy changes proposed in SB 20.

She noted that the current process for teacher certification in another state was lengthy. She mentioned the expedited licensure for military spouses as proposed in the bill. She noted that the Department of Defense had found that teaching was the most prevalent occupation among licensed military spouses. She cited that 34 percent of military spouses required an occupational license in order to work, and teaching certification was the most common. She discussed statistics that indicated a military spouse's ability to continue in a career affected a service member's decision to remain in the military. She thought the bill was important for supporting military families.

[10:14:30 AM](#)

Co-Chair Bishop OPENED public testimony.

[10:14:46 AM](#)

Co-Chair Bishop CLOSED public testimony.

Senator Stevens appreciated hearing from the Department of Defense. He acknowledged that many members had military installations in their districts. He highlighted the importance of an expedited teacher certification timeline for military spouses as proposed in the bill.

SB 20 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

[10:16:18 AM](#)

RECESSED

#

ADJOURNED

[10:16:18 AM](#)

This meeting automatically ADJOURNED when the 1:00 PM scheduled meeting convened.